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ABSTRACT

Described are efforts of Augustana College to integrate special and regular teacher education programs in Project P.R.E.P. (Preparing Regular Education Personnel for Mainstream Programs). Noted are double majors in Elementary Education and Special Education, the physical proximity of both departments, cooperation with other human service departments, the provision of inservice training for college professors, and inclusion of ways to serve children with special needs in all methods courses. (DB)

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PREPARING FOR MAINSTREAMING IN TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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"PREPARING FOR MAINSTREAMING IN TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS"

A story, told to me by Reginald L. Jones at the University of California at Berkeley, was put in the following way:

During World War I, Will Rogers told of his solution for German U-Boats and their threat to Allied Ships. He said we should raise the temperature of the Atlantic Ocean to boiling, thus to force the U-Boats to surface. When they surfaced they could easily be sunk. When asked how he would raise the Atlantic to boiling, he replied that he just got the idea and it was up to someone else to work out the details.

I mention this story to exemplify a point. In essence someone, whether it be the courts, legislatures, or state departments, has said, I have an idea--that idea is Mainstreaming--and it is up to the schools to work out the details. My questions are these: How do the colleges assist the schools in working out these details? Just how do the colleges and universities fit into the mainstream concept? How are we preparing our students for mainstreaming environments? What is the role of the colleges and universities in the mainstreaming effort?

Mainstreaming is not a fad; the concept of the least restrictive alternative was made even stronger with the passage of Public Law 94-142. We are in an age of individual rights. The focus in society and education today is on the individual.

Many changes are occuring now in the world of education, much as a direct result of Public law 94-142, to provide for children in a least restrictive setting. More and more children with handicaps are being served in regular classrooms. Support personnel are being hired to assist teachers. Children who have severe handicaps are being seen more and more in the public school setting. These are children who were not in public schools a few years ago.

It is of great concern to many of us that we are seeing children being mainstreamed before the support services and the resource systems are developed to cope with these children. Also, we see resource systems being developed before personnel are available and are ready to manage them. Special educators are being hired as consultants before they have been taught consultive skills. Several teachers who have previously taught in self-contained settings have become the new resource teachers. This is an entirely different teaching situation and some of these teachers have had difficulty in adjusting to this change. The role of the special educator is changing and many special educators are uncertain as to their new role. Some special educators are now finding themselves dealing with the severely handicapped--an area for which some have had little or no training. Many regular classroom teachers feel that they do not have the skills necessary to work with the many individual differences found in the regular classroom setting.

All of these things make it clear that the pressure for change often precedes the knowledge necessary for a smooth transition.

The Mainstreaming issue is a very complex one. Unless the colleges and universities do some changing also, like most public schools are doing, the mainstreaming concept could be in deep trouble.

But mainstreaming should not be allowed to fail because we as college educators are unable to face the necessary changes that need to be made at the college and university level. When we look at most college and university programs, we find that many of them are "too restrictive" themselves. There is much separation between regular education and special education.

I am directing a federally funded project at Augustana College in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. This project is one of the "Dean's Grants." The title of our project is Project P.R.E.P. (Preparing Regular Education Peronnel

for Mainstream Programs). The immediate purpose of these Dean's grants is to increase the knowledge and skills of regular education personnel to more effectively meet the needs of exceptional learners. The ultimate goal is to extend the compentencies of regular education personnel to accommodate a broader range of individual differences among students and, in particular, to provide each exceptional student with appropriate educational services.

Our grant has resulted in many changes in our program at Augustana. Augustana is a private college with a student enrollment of approximately 2,200 students. The total faculty in the Department of Education is 41, including part-time faculty. We have nearly 700 majors, 1/3 of the campus population, enrolled in the Department of Education. Over one-half of these are double majors in Elementary Education and Special Education. Almost all of our Special Education majors do double major in Elementary Education and they are encouraged to do so.

When we were writing the initial proposal for our grant, we took a good look at ourselves. The entire faculty felt that mainstreaming was coming of age and that the college had better take a look at the issues involved with the concept of educating children in the least restrictive setting. But, when we looked at ourselves, we were not modeling what we were teaching, or modeling what we said we believed in.

Education and Special Education were two separate departments at Augustana prior to our grant program. Like many public school facilities, the special education facilities were the poorest on campus. In fact, the faculty offices were housed in an old barracks. Regular education was located in other parts of the campus.

It is our belief that the most sensible way of preparing college students for mainstreaming environments is to demonstrate the benefits of an integrated

approach between regular and special education departments during the students' training.

As a part of the change in our education program at Augustana, we are no longer functioning as a separate Department of Special Education. Special Education is a part of--not apart from--the Department of Education. Last year we moved together in a new building. (In part we have the fire marshall to thank for this, as he condemned the Special Education barracks.) We even interchanged offices and our Special Education and Education Chairmen share the same office. The special education faculty is serving as resource personnel to the regular education faculty. The special education faculty has also provided inservice for the regular education faculty. We meet together, share common educational concerns, and we are getting to know one another. This has been brought about by retreats, dinners, lunches, and meetings together. Special workshops, seminars, and released time for faculty study also were initiated. Staff development was felt to be very important.

We feel that we are now modeling some of the concepts we are expecting of the public schools. This move together has not totally been an easy one. Changes in teacher preparation programs always seem to produce a certain degree of resistance, expecially when the existing program is perceived by the faculty as successful. We have had our problems, but we are teaming together as we have never done before. We broke down that wall that previously existed between regular and special education. Our students have been the ones to benefit from this change. They have noted more team teaching, more cooperation, and a better understanding of the mainstreaming movement because, in essence, we have mainstreamed ourselves.

At Augustana we are not ignoring the role of other human service departments in promoting the mainstreaming concept. Colleges and universities, by

their organizational patterns, have tended to support not only separation, but competition between groups dealing with the area of human services.

Previously, many of us in education have been known to separate ourselves from nursing health services, psychology, social work, sociology, and other related schools and departments. To effectively model mainstreaming concepts, not only do we have to break down walls between regular education and special education departments, but also the walls between education and the entire human services area. If mainstreaming is to succeed, we must recognize that present organizational patterns in our colleges and universities do present problems and we must work for greater integration of all human service areas in educational personnel training programs. At our college we are seeing more of the students majoring in the other human service areas taking education courses and vice versa. We see a need to meet with other faculty in the human service areas to work together in planning for practicum sites.

Teachers in our school systems can play a very significant role in designing and evaluating the college training program. We need to ask teachers and administrators what they feel the colleges and universities need to do to provide better teacher training. College professors must get out into the schools more to understand the problems faced by our schools today. Regular teacher educators need to see what is happening in special education situations. Special education teacher educators need to see the regular classroom, especially those regular classrooms where handicapped children have been integrated. Student teaching supervision should be a shared responsibility. Particularly for students who double major in elementary education/special education, student teacher supervisors need to see them teach in both situations. The elementary education and special education

student teacher supervisors need to team up to carry out the student teaching supervision.

An important part of the teacher training institution's role will be in the area of inservice training. All teachers will need some re-training. We must not forget however, that the university professors who will be asked to provide inservice training for the schools may be in need of much inservice themselves. Since there is an expressed need for public school teachers and administrators to be trained and re-trained in special techniques, methods and materials, feelings, and attitudes, the university professor must also undergo serious inservice training for the same purpose. Our grant has, in part, provided inservice for our college faculty, but this has not been an easy task. We as college faculty have to admit that, like teachers in the public schools, the college professor is also in need of inservice.

A problem exists at many colleges when promotion and tenure are concerned. University and college faculty are seldom promoted for providing services outside of the college setting. Consultation to public schools is not viewed by some as important as publishing in a journal, writing grants, or researching a particular area. If we expect changes in teacher education, we must broaden the incentive system at our universities and colleges.

It has been said by some that as many as twenty to forty percent of the children in our schools have some special needs. Therefore, all educators must be knowledgeable concerning all children. They must know about the different types of handicapping conditions. They must learn how to be interdisciplinarians. They must understand individualization. They must have a knowledge of referral services, and they must know how to deal with children who are being integrated into the regular classroom. The regular classroom teacher will bear the major responsibility for mainstreaming success.

Until we as teacher educators assume the responsibility for preparing teachers to meet the special needs of all children, mainstreaming will not succeed. In order for children with special needs to be successful in regular classes, all teachers must be able to deal effectively with individual differences.

Through Augustana's Project P.R.E.P., we are preparing regular education personnel for mainstream programs and to meet the needs of all children seen in a regular classroom. We have encouraged our regular education students to take some special education course work. Most of our students are doing this, knowing that it would not be feasible to require all students to take course work in special education, our changes have been in our existing methods courses, rather than the addition of new course requirements. If your state is like our state, we seem to be always adding course requirements for teacher certification, but never deleting any. It is our opinion that adding one or two required special education courses to a student's curriculum is not going to be that effective.

We, therefore, sought to make changes in all of our existing methods courses. Through discussions and inservice with our methods faculty, all of our methods courses now contain a section on individualizing and dealing with children with special needs. Since the Dean serves as our project administrator, he was able to see that this portion of our project was carried through. Special education faculty served as resource personnel, and in some instances taught the section on dealing with children with special needs. Through faculty inservice, it was observed that some of our own faculty had some pertinent questions about dealing with the college student with a handicap in the college classroom setting. It was noted that some of our education faculty might be able to teach about individualized instruction and students with special needs,

but they had difficulty dealing with the concept in their own college classroom. It was for this reason we sponsored a Handicap Awareness Day on our campus. This involved the entire campus, not just the Department of Education. The day focused on attitudes, a concept that is very difficult to teach. We put some faculty and students in wheelchairs and on crutches. We blindfolded some students and faculty. Some faculty and students wore earplugs for part of the day. We did a study of architectural barriers on our campus. We provided speakers throughout the day on such topics as, "The College Student with a Visual Handicap," "The Physically Handicapped College Student," "The College Student with a Hearing Impairment," "The College Student with Reading, Writing, and Spelling Problems," and "Community Resources Available to Assist the College Professor with Students with Special Needs." The day was exciting and profitable for all of us. Some of our faculty realized after that day that helping teachers deal with the uniqueness of their students is basically an attitudinal problem. Several faculty and students learned that persons tend to fear differences and changes.

All of us realize that changes in education programming have seldom been initiated by college personnel. Instead, parent groups, teacher demands, court actions, federal and/or state legislation or certification standards have really been the ones to create a change in our education program format. It was not until Public Law 94-142 was passed that many of our faculty felt the need to change our education program at Augustana.

Colleges must now teach to all education majors about placement committee functions, referral and identification procedures, school law, rights of parents, counseling parents, due process, accountability, individualized education plans, writing behavior objectives, and the components of Public Law 94-142, just to name a few.

College faculty need to take a good look at the prospective teacher education graduate. We need to individualize our college programs and to know our students on an individual basis. We need to face up to the fact that not all of our students are going to make it in the teaching profession. We will need to counsel some students out of education.

Our graduates not only have to work and communicate effectively with children, they also have to work and communicate just as effectively with adults. No matter how well a student does academically, if he/she cannot get along with others, he/she will have a difficult future. These students must know how to work with other professionals and para-professionals in their classrooms and schools. They must also be able to develop good relationships with parents and know how to counsel effectively and deal with parents.

At Augustana we are providing practicum experiences at the sophomore year so that our students get experiences early in their program working with exceptional children. These experiences also give the college faculty an opportunity to observe our students so that we can foresee any potential problems before student teaching.

It is important that we remember that the most effective way to improve education in our public schools is to improve teacher education.

Handicapped children can be successful in the mainstream of education only when teachers are willing to accept these children and whey they have the skill and confidence to deal with full range of children's behavior--this is our responsibility as teacher educators and it is indeed a challenge.